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SUBJECT: A/S DESUTTER ENGAGES HOLY SEE ON NONPROLIFERATION,
DISARMAMENT, AND IRANIAN PROLIFERATION

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Assistant Secretary for Verification, Compliance, and Implementation Paula DeSutter, in a September 13 meeting with Holy See Deputy Foreign Minister-equivalent Monsignor Pietro Parolin, reviewed the status of various arms control negotiations currently underway and stressed the importance of having verifiable agreements. Parolin told A/S DeSutter that Iran is seeking to engage the Holy See on many fronts and suggested that the Holy See might be able to play a constructive role in the current Iranian weapons of mass destruction (WMD) discussions. Parolin indicated that in addition to nonproliferation, the Holy See would like to see increased emphasis on disarmament within the international community. A/S DeSutter briefed Parolin on the USG's views regarding Iran's nuclear aims, emphasizing that Iran's actions were distinguishable from other nuclear powers because it had purposely violated its commitments by signing a nonproliferation treaty while secretly pursuing a nuclear program. A/S DeSutter said a successful outcome to the Iranian matter was extremely important, as many other countries with nuclear ambitions would take lessons from the outcome. End Summary.

Holy See: Not Just Nonproliferation, But Disarmament Also

¶2. (C) Assistant Secretary for Verification, Compliance, and Implementation Paula DeSutter, meeting September 13 with Holy See Deputy Foreign Minister-equivalent Monsignor Pietro Parolin, reviewed the status of various arms control issues currently being deliberated, including negotiations on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty; post-START talks with the Russian Federation (the reason for which A/S DeSutter was in Rome); the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT); and the draft Russian treaty on weapons in space. She emphasized that verification is a key component of any effective treaty and noted that users' intent was impossible to verify, given that many nuclear items are dual use items. A/S DeSutter also emphasized the need to take meaningful actions, such as the need to establish a biodata registry, as opposed to "feel good" agreements that do not change anything or advance arms control goals. For his part,

Parolin emphasized that WMD disarmament must go hand-in-hand with nonproliferation. Referring to Pope Benedict's July 22nd Angelus in Lorenzago di Cadore, Italy, Parolin said that the Holy See views war as "senseless slaughter" and that, to avoid war, there must be balanced and controlled disarmament in conjunction with nonproliferation. Parolin added, "there does not seem to be a big commitment to disarmament within the international community."

¶3. (C) A/S DeSutter emphasized that the nonproliferation treaties the U.S. and others signed call for both non-proliferation and for eventual disarmament. However, some signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), having promised not to proliferate, are going against their commitments. She noted that Israel, Pakistan, and India did not sign the NPT, but Iran was a signatory.

Iran: There is a "Double Standard" on WMD Nonproliferation

¶4. (C) Parolin said that the Holy See had discussed non-proliferation with Iran, insisting on the need for compliance on the NPT while expressing a desire for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Parolin noted that while the Iranians appeared open to negotiations on this issue, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the international community's apparent double standard toward Iran in view of the international community's treatment of other nuclear powers such as Israel.

¶5. (C) A/S DeSutter explained that Iran had purposely committed

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a 20-year long falsehood by signing a nonproliferation treaty and benefiting from technology transfer under that treaty while secretly pursuing a nuclear program. "That sets Iran apart from

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other powers," said A/S DeSutter. The United States draws a clear distinction between those who cheat on commitments and those who play by the rules. "Iran took advantage of the situation," and as a result gained many benefits including technological assistance and favorable trade relations with some countries; if Iran gets away with this, others will note the results and follow, said A/S DeSutter. The issue of how to punish violators is very important since sanctions can cause short-term financial hardships on the countries imposing the sanctions. Nevertheless, the long-term potential cost of losing this important nonproliferation regime far outweighs any short-term loss of trade.

Holy See: Iran Wants to Talk

¶6. (C) Parolin said that the Holy See has observed some movement within Iran towards moderation. While President Ahmadinejad presents certain challenges, others within Iran are more pragmatic and do not necessarily agree with Ahmadinejad.

Iran has approached us, said Parolin, and indicated an eagerness to have a dialogue with the Holy See on diplomatic, political, and religious issues.

¶7. (C) Parolin told us that Pope Benedict favored engaging Iran and had observed that there are many common areas for discussions including culture, economic development, and human rights. We welcome the chance to discuss these matters with Iran, said Parolin.

Perhaps the Holy See Can Help?

¶8. (C) In response to Parolin's query regarding U.S. hopes for a resolution to the Iranian WMD situation, A/S DeSutter said there is a great deal of hope, but it would take more than diplomatic pressure to change Iran at this juncture; economic pressure including sanctions will be necessary. She added that we need to make the Iranian people aware of their government's detrimental actions because so far the Iranian government has hidden this matter from them. Parolin indicated that the Holy See was willing to play a role in helping the international community with Iran in this endeavor.

¶9. (U) A/S DeSutter did not have a chance to review and clear on this cable.

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